

AIR POUCH

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FOREIGN

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FROM

AmEmbassy, JEDDA

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REF

Embtel 458, October 24, 1958

CONFIDENTIAL/UNCLASSIFIED

EX-101-100-0000

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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS

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EX-101-100-0000

October 27, 1958

DATE

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SUBJECT:

PRINCE FAISAL HOLDS HIS FIRST SAUDI PRESS CONFERENCE.

REPORTER

ACTION COPY - DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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A question period followed. The Crown Prince answered questions on the Mecca Mosque, internal improvements, and Aramco. In answer to a question by al-Adwa's editor, Said Baishan, who led last month's press attack on Aramco (Emb. Desp. No. 79, Oct. 8, 1958) as to the injustices which "some people" ascribe to that company, Faisal replied that the original concession terms were not good, because the Government had not believed there was oil in the Eastern Province, and had not pressed for better terms. This original concession agreement has since been revised in the interest of the people, and the Government is constantly requiring Aramco to improve the lot of its workers. Faisal then expressed the hope that Saudi youth would turn from "theoretical and linguistic studies" to learn oil affairs, geology and other practical subjects. A composite report of this press conference as presented by the newspapers represented is attached as Enclosure No. 1.

COMMENT: The most interesting thing about this conference is that it was held. No new information was presented and the comments were pointedly general although the conference lasted two and a half hours. Faisal's comment on Aramco was moderate but stressed that the government "constantly requires Aramco to improve the lot of the workers." The conference will probably increase slightly the confidence which educated Saudis feel toward the Faisal administration. It was fairly cleverly organized, so as to allow mild criticism of the past (thus relieving some tensions among the intellectuals). It held out the hope of gradual improvement under Faisal. And, perhaps most important of all it has set a precedent whereby the Saudi press may ask the Prime Minister questions, however mild and carefully prepared those questions may be.

Donald R. Heath

Donald R. Heath

Enclosure: *CH*
As stated

cc: Amcongen Dhahran

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Al-Bilad as-Saudiyya,
Hira and
Umm al-Qura

THE FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE OF
HIS HIGHNESS THE PRESIDENT
OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

On Thursday morning (October 23) His Highness Prince Faisal, Crown Prince and President of the Council of Ministers held a press conference with the editors of Saudi newspapers, in which he discussed internal and foreign policy. His Highness also answered the questions of these journalists. His Excellency Shaikh Abdullah Balkhair attended the conference and presented the following journalists to His Highness:

Ahmad Siba'i - Chief Editor of Nadwa
Salih Muhammad Jamal - Chief Editor of Hira
Muhammad Said al-Amadi - Chief Editor of al-Haj
Osman Hafiz - Chief Editor of al-Madina
Hassan Ghazzas - Owner of Arafat
Hamid Mutawwa - for Al-Bilad as-Saudiyya
Muhammad Said Baisha'an - Editor of al-Adwa

Saudi journalists had requested His Royal Highness the President of the Council of Ministers to offer an opportunity to meet and listen to his statements, so that the public could be informed of the decisions of His Majesty's Government. His Highness was generous enough to grant this opportunity yesterday morning.

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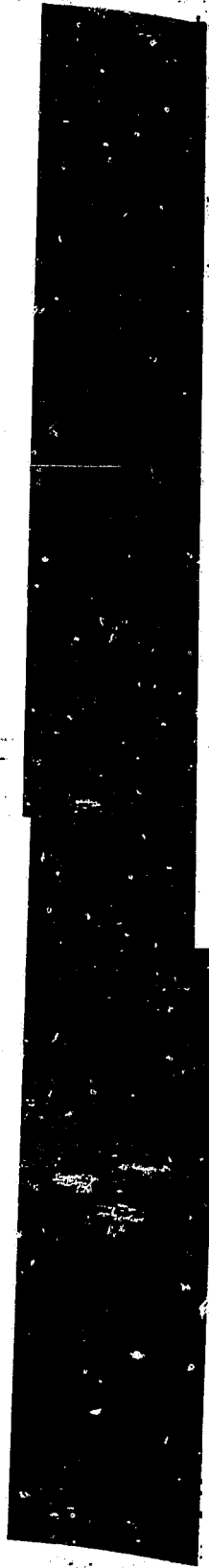
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His Highness answered a question by Said Baishan (Al-Adwa) concerning what is believed by some people to be the injustices of the Arabian Oil Company (sic-ARAMCO is clearly meant): "The circumstances under which the agreement with that Company was concluded over thirty years ago were special. The Government of His Royal Majesty the King, after many prior explorations for oil carried on by several foreign companies, believed, in accordance with the reports of these foreign companies, that the existence of oil in the Eastern Province was doubtful. Therefore we did not press for good terms. However, if we compare the preliminary agreement with the amendments added to it in the people's interest, (we find) a big difference. The Government of His Royal Majesty has achieved many of the goals which it wished to attain for the state's treasury, for the people, and for citizens of our neighboring countries who are working for the Oil Company.

His Royal Majesty's Government has required the Company to do all that it has done in recent years, that is, improving the level of the laborers, raising their standard of living, and obliging it to build schools, homes, and roads which are used by laborers and employees of the Company.

His Royal Majesty's Government does not spare any effort on any occasion to oblige the Company to undertake anything which is in the interest of all those who work for it. In this matter we are very anxious to guide and direct

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our youth

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our youth toward a technical education, as required by our country in its modernization. We hope that youth from now on will take up practical subjects which we badly need, by learning geometry, medicine, oil affairs, agriculture and geology. We want our development to cover all these vital fields, in order that we may meet the present shortage in supply of our social and governmental requirements. Our country needs doctors, engineers and farmers, more than it needs students of linguistic sciences and theories.

By this time the correspondents and journalists had taken two hours and thirty minutes of His Highness' time. They thanked him for this successful conference, and repeated their thanks, appreciation and praise for such meetings, whose proceedings will be made public. They then bade him farewell, thanking him.

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